



Strategic Human Resources Management in the Digital Library Context

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Executive summary

The aim of Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) is to provide a future direction to manage people in terms of the long-term planning of human resource management by aligning it with an organization's overall plan. Library as an organization is already in practice of SHRM, but there are some challenges that need to attend due to the huge changes in library management style due to digitization services. The nature and role of libraries have changed in response to the new digital environment; new applications and services have been developed and that differs from traditional libraries and their approaches to information provision. New kinds of job responsibilities have been in practice and new types of skills and competencies are in demand. The management needs to identify the challenges and handle the situation with care in terms of long term benefit of the library as well as for the human resources. This report focuses on strategic human resource management techniques in a digital library environment which may help policy makers to identify ways in which they can motivate their employees, and policy planners to identify their staff's different requirements in digital library context.

Keywords: Strategic human resource management, Digital library, Human resource management

1 Introduction

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) is the proactive management of people (Bratton & Gold, 2007; Price, 2011). It helps organizations to best meet the needs of their employees while promoting the organizational goal (Schuler & Jackson, 2008). In general, human resource management deals with any aspects of an organization that affects employees, such as hiring and firing, pay, benefits, training, administration, incentives, safety procedure information, and sick or vacation days, where SHRM requires thinking ahead, and planning ways for an organization to better meet the needs of its employees, and for the employees to better meet the needs of the organization. It is often said that library is a growing organization. Good library managers are always aware of such growing things as the facilities available in the Library need to be expanded further, taking the needs of the users into account. Libraries are also counted as top organizations where the uses of information technologies were welcomed since the beginning of information technologies in use. Now a day's, libraries are ahead of other organization in terms of using sophisticated technologies. Libraries are the leading organizations that are preserving the explicit knowledge in digital format for the sake of future generations. Modern libraries are being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. They are extending services beyond the physical walls of a building, by providing material accessible by electronic means, and by providing the assistance of librarians in navigating and analyzing tremendous amounts of information with a variety of digital tools. If we look at these kinds of development in the library world, it is very easy to identify such changes in the history of respective library development as well as in the literature. As a rapidly growing organization library managers need to focus on SHRM. Being able to plan for the needs of employees by thinking ahead can help to improve the rate of skilled library professionals who chose to remain working for the library. Improving the employee retention rate can reduce the burden of finding and training new employees, but help to develop employees' skills to achieve the organizational goal in smooth way. This report focuses on how SHRM should take into account according to the new required competencies of library professionals in the digital library context.

2 Competencies required by library professionals for digital libraries

Human resources, when pertaining to the library, can be defined as the different kinds of professionals and non-professionals staff responsible for diverse services for the community (8Rs Research Team, 2005). As arguably the most important of the library system inputs, the performance and the benefits the system can deliver depend largely upon the knowledge, skills and motivation of those individuals responsible for delivering library services (8Rs Research Team, 2005; Moshoeshoe-Chadzingwa, 2010). The nature and role of libraries have changed in response to the new digital environment; new applications and services have been developed (Croneis & Henderson, 2002; Stoffle et al., 2003). Digital libraries have unique characteristics that differ from traditional libraries and their approaches to information provision. From a traditional librarian's point of view, digital libraries present a transformative model of a large-scale, user-centric organization that is moving towards an integrated form with various components (Choi & Rasmussen, 2006). Libraries are putting more emphasis on electronic and digital information resources. Specialized job responsibilities have emerged to handle resources. Networking capabilities, the development of the Web, and the explosion in the number of resources required the involvement of librarians with technical expertise. In addition, a wider variety of departments became involved in such activities as negotiating licenses, establishing authorization mechanisms, and providing access via online catalogs and Web pages (Croneis & Henderson, 2002). From the above discussion, it is easy to predict that the role of library professionals is always in changing trends. Job responsibilities of traditional library professionals have tremendous changes due to the electronic and digital information sources.

If we look at some job advertisements for library professionals, then it could be easily identified that what kinds of new skills are required by the library professionals. Apart from any national or regional context we can look at the global context in this aspect. We can look at the recent job advertisement of The International Monetary Fund (IMF) (https://imf.taleo.net/careersection/imf_external/jobdetail.ftl), which planned a global recruitment for some of its positions. Other than common qualification like university degrees, English language requirements, Strong analytical and problem-solving skills, ability of team works, and experience, etc., the followings are the major requirements for the respective positions:

Digital Records Management Officer	Archivist/Records Officers	Librarian
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good working knowledge of and experience with electronic management principles and systems; experience with Autonomy Records Manager application is desirable; • Familiarity with the technical guidelines contained in ISO 15489 - International Standard for Records Management and DoD 5015.2 Standards; • Experience with creating/managing information systems and databases; • Experience with basic HTML, XML, SQL and Crystal Reports desirable; • Experience with Enterprise Content Management Systems, including SharePoint, is desirable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be familiar with international standards for Archives Management and have experience in the application of those standards. • In-depth knowledge of professional archival standards, methods and procedures in archives management in both paper and electronic form, knowledge of ISAD (G) and RAD archival description standards • Experience in an archival setting along with knowledge of post-WWII history and /or economics • Archives management and preservation methods are highly desirable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating and searching news, bibliographic data and statistical commercial electronic services, and delivering research and reference services. • Experience delivering and developing innovative electronic information products, including a good understanding of technical issues • A broad understanding of the business of the World Bank and the IMF and the information needed to support work in economics, finance, statistics and economic development areas.

From the above advertisement, it is clear that library professionals in digital libraries require a range of competencies and activities that are quite different from those required in traditional libraries . However, it does not mean that traditional library skills will no longer required, indeed most of them will be (Kim, Warga, & Moen, 2013), perhaps with some changes, but many new skills are required. In this connectionm we can mention Pinfield (2001) who stated that in managing electronic library services the future library professionals will require a number of skills like vision; IT skills, communication skills; presentation skills; negotiation skills; subject

skills; project management skills; team working skills etc. The IMF job advertisement is just the burning reflection of Pinfileds predictions.

From the IMF advertisement it is very easy to estimate that the organization is looking for some library professionals who have the said skills with job experiences in the respective field. It is obvious that IMF is recruiting the human resources according to their organization's goal. However, it is not sure from the advertisement that whether these are newly created post or existing one. Anyway, the types of job responsibilities that IMF is going to give the hired persons are more or less same in the general context of the digital library environment. Contrariwise, in general, the managers of libraries may not have a chance to hire new personnel all the time for every new kind of service or modification of services or the use of new technologies. They need to take a SHRM plan for upcoming changes in the long term plan with their present human resources, and be be aware of about their existing library professionals should able to achieve such competencies to serve the users as present and future demands. At the same time, the concept of digital libraries have been created new job responsibilities like System Librarian, Metadata librarian, Digital Initiatives Coordinator, Electronic librarian, E-book manager etc. (Choi & Rasmussen, 2006; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009), which were not available even before the flourished on the internet. As a result the library managers are in the challenge and they should have library professionals who demonstrate specific skills and competencies and are deeply committed to gaining new skills and competencies throughout their careers. However, it is not a one day task or a year. It needs a long term planning with organizational goal and also related to the organizational budget.

3 SHRM issues Digital Library context

Now it is questionable about how libraries or library managers should adapt SHRM to achieve the organizational goal. When creating a human resources plan, it is important to consider employees may want or need and what the organization can reasonably supply. A larger organization like public library or large university library can usually afford training and benefit programs that smaller library or special libraries or departmental libraries where comparatively less manpower works, cannot afford to offer. This does not mean that smaller libraries should not engage with strategic human resource management. Providing specialized on-site training, even

if provided by senior members of the libraries, and offering one-on-one assessment and coaching sessions, can help library professionals to reach peak performance rates.

This process may begin when a library is recruiting and interviewing prospective professionals and non-professionals. Improved interviewing techniques can help to weed out applicants that may not be a good match for the digital library context. After being hired on, a strong training and mentoring program can help a new member up to speed on the library policies and any current or ongoing projects they will be working on. To help employees perform at their best, a library can follow up with continual training programs, coaching, and regular assessment. Investing in the development of the library professionals can allow a library to turn out more consistent services. Depending on circumstances and factors prevailing in the organization, it may lead to expansion or reduction of the workforce, redeployment or enrichment of certain jobs. Library managers should then plan for the right quantity and quality of human resources that will enable the library to realize its objective. Managers must be proactive and cannot wait for things to happen first, for example, study workers' habits, needs, tastes and so on in order to predict employees possible actions and movements and the impact these will have on the organization.

4 Discussion

Management must continuously scan the human resource environment in order to identify developments that can either enhance or threaten its survival. It is quite sure that the library managers need to take into account the SHRM process which is typically broken down into five steps: mission and goals; environmental analysis; strategic formulation; strategy implementation; strategy evaluation. At the same time the balanced scorecard (Self, 2003) should be in use as it helps to foresee how well employees have been doing, how well they are doing now, and what can be expected to do in the future (Niven, 2011). Using the balanced scorecard will definitely give positive and fruitful result in focusing on the factors that create long-term value for the library (Hammes, 2009). It should keep in mind that library balanced scorecard is somehow different than business organization's balanced score card. The library balanced scorecard is interrelated with users, information resources, internal process and organizational readiness (Cribb, 2005; Lewis et al., 2013). But, all these relations strongly depends on finance as the

library is a non-profit organization. Simultaneously, Library managers should identify the issues where staff has differences of opinion: changing employees' expectations about work, transformational leadership, job satisfaction, performance feedback and delegation of responsibility. Such kind of study should be valuable to library administrators, educators, and librarians in understanding current and emerging staffing patterns, designing an effective curriculum, and providing insight into the broader, ongoing inquiry into the changing nature of work in libraries.

Last but not the least, in aspect of digitization, libraries should benefit equally from the change. However, there may be some staffs who feel that they are lagging behind in this so-called new "information age", without adequate up to date technological facilities and training. This situation could be even more pronounced in rural areas where facilities are not the same as in towns. For example, most rural villages (especially in developing countries' perspectives) may not have electricity, and consequently, the libraries there do not have any access to digital services and the number of users of computer is near to null. In that case, the library managers need to be aware of such practical barriers before taking SHRM process.

5 Conclusion

Digital libraries are an emerging concept, as today's libraries routinely provide information and services in digital form. However, the main purpose of digital libraries remains consistent with that of traditional libraries in that the purpose of digital libraries is to organize, distribute, and preserve information resources just as it is for traditional libraries. Therefore, there is a lot of new competencies are required by the library professionals. A well design SHRM process can help the library to provide in time services according to the demand of the decade. Library policy makers should not treat all of their staff similarly while their staffs in fact seem to have differences of opinions on a number of issues. Such policy makers should consider a whole variety of factors surrounding employee differentiation when formulating any or all policies affected by such SHRM issues. This should enable them to manage staff in such a way that the whole library community can work at optimum towards achieving the library's goals and objectives, thus providing best services to their customers. In a nutshell, people are the key strategic resource, and strategy must be built on a human resource foundation.

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